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ABSTRACT

An arts education survey was undertaken in 1989 to establish comprehensive, baseline information regarding arts education in Wyoming schools. The findings serve as a standard against which to measure future changes in the quality of arts education in the state. This report is designed to highlight the initial findings of the survey. Arts education for Wyoming students was compared with national trends. It was found that Wyoming, unlike many other states, does not have a high school graduation requirement in the arts, and does not require compulsory arts instruction at the elementary and middle school level. An analysis of arts specialists by discipline revealed that there is a gradual decline in arts classes offered as students progress through the Wyoming school system. A question about the availability of classes revealed that music and the visual arts are emphasized most at elementary and middle school levels. Other issues addressed included the time allotted to arts content areas, the broad spectrum of students who study the arts, and resources for arts education. A description of future plans and how the state of Wyoming can fulfill them concludes the document. (KM)

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Building The ARTS In Education In Wyoming

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A Preliminary Report

Wyoming Arts Education Survey

Joint Sponsors:
Wyoming Council on the Arts
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Wyoming Alliance for Arts in Education

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"Art, no less than philosophy or science, issues a challenge to the intellect. The great works of music, sculpture, painting, engraving and all other forms of artistic expression engage the mind, teaching lessons about order, proportion, and genius."

– William J. Bennett
Former U.S. Secretary of Education

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The Wyoming Arts Education Survey

In 1988, in town meetings across Wyoming, artists, educators, administrators, legislators, business people, parents and others declared that arts education matters to them. Requests for development of arts curricula guidelines and arts education advocacy tools were high on their lists of priorities for arts in education in Wyoming.

Thus, the major purpose of the Wyoming Arts Education Survey undertaken in 1989 was to establish comprehensive, baseline information regarding arts education in Wyoming schools: to find out what is actually out there.

The findings of the survey will serve as a standard against which to measure future changes and as a guide for responsible planning to effect intelligent, positive change in the quality of arts education in Wyoming schools.

The Wyoming State Constitution legislates school districts to local control, allowing for flexibility, diversity and the specific and unique needs of individual communities. Considering this, the Arts Education Survey was designed to provide a solid base for action in the creation of a visionary model for arts in education throughout Wyoming. It will be a model which allows Wyoming communities to retain their personal identities and particular strengths while ensuring that all Wyoming children receive a comprehensive, sequential arts education ... the kind of education which will enrich not only their lives but also the community in which they live.

This preliminary report is designed to highlight initial findings of the survey and to serve as a preview to the final, comprehensive, art-by-art analysis.

This report and the survey are in keeping with current efforts by the National Endowment for the Arts, the United States Office of Education and national education associations to upgrade and stress the importance of arts education in America.

National Research Centers have been established at the State University of New York, New York University, University of Illinois and Michigan State University to define the status of arts education in the nation and to develop exemplary curriculum.

In Wyoming, the Wyoming Council on the Arts and the Wyoming Alliance for Arts in Education have joined with the Wyoming State Department of Education in forming a new commitment to arts in education in Wyoming, with the goal of providing all Wyoming students with unprecedented opportunities in the arts and a lifelong appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of the arts.

How We Compare Nationally

It is difficult to study any subject without a proper reference. National trends indicate a heightening interest in establishing cultural literacy in all American children. Thus, recently, a number of studies have been conducted which now provide a useful comparison of Wyoming to other states in the nation.

- **29** states have enacted high school graduation requirements which, in some way, include the arts, 27 of them in the past eight years.

Wyoming is not among them.

Fewer than 1% of Wyoming schools have instituted any arts requirements of their own at the high school level.

- **42** states require school districts to offer arts instruction in elementary, middle or secondary school.

Wyoming is not among them.

Wyoming's requirement that one year of fine arts be offered may be fulfilled in the schools by the offering of a category called "useful arts" encompassing home economics, shop, etc.

In addition, Wyoming is one of two states in the nation with no statewide arts education curriculum guide available to districts interested in achieving an exemplary arts curriculum. **Educating Through The Arts** is an out-of-print handbook offering general goals of an arts curriculum.

37% of respondents to the Wyoming Arts Education Survey report that their districts have compiled their own district guides to aid teachers in teaching the arts to their students. The majority of those guides are available in music and/or visual arts. Fewer than 5% report that they have any sort of guide available to help in teaching any of the other arts subjects at any grade level.

- **50**% of school districts nationwide report that the percentage of their budgets allocated to arts education **increased,** 1982 to 1987.

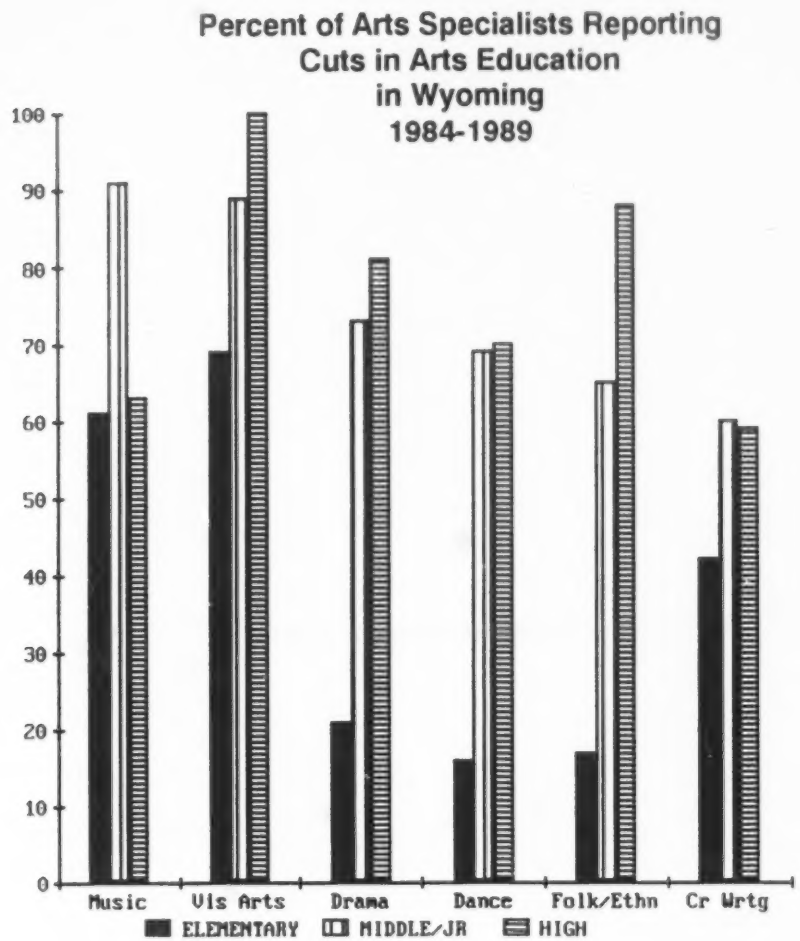
Wyoming is not among them.

Our survey respondents report **cuts** in all areas of arts education in Wyoming in the last five years.

Presently, there is no arts education coordinator/consultant in the Wyoming Department of Education. Although one was appointed in 1986, the position was removed, along with other coordinator positions, in 1987 due to state budget cuts.

"... learning in the arts can not only develop the discipline and craft necessary to constructive creation, it can also help students to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills essential to a productive work force and to the learning of other subjects."

–Toward Civilization, A Report on Arts Education,
published by the National Endowment for the Arts



Cuts have been seen most frequently in music and visual arts in Wyoming as these are the areas of highest concentration of arts classes. However, when looking at the percent of respondents reporting cuts in their areas of specialization, the survey shows a high proportion of cuts across the board, with **ALL** visual arts teachers reporting cuts within the past five years, for example. A clear majority of arts specialists report cuts in all areas in the middle/junior high school and high school levels and cuts are substantially noted even at the elementary school level.

Where We Stand

The Wyoming Arts Education Survey was distributed to 475 Wyoming arts educators. 255 responses have been received: a 54% response rate. Of the respondents, 88% were full-time art teachers. 63% taught at more than one educational level (elementary, middle/junior high school, and senior high school). Responses came from 39 of Wyoming's 49 public school districts and 21 of her 23 counties.

Breakdown of Arts Specialists by Discipline

	Music	Visual Arts	Theater /Drama	Dance	Folk/ Ethnic Arts	Creative Writing
Elementary School	39%	22%	13%	12%	12%	5%
Middle/Junior High	29%	22%	9%	5%	8%	15%
High School	23%	9%	12%	4%	3%	9%

Respondents to the survey report that they teach arts classes in Music, Visual Arts, Theater/Drama, Dance, Folk/Ethnic and Traditional Arts, and Creative Writing to Wyoming students. (The above breakdown shows, for example, that the greatest number of arts specialists responding teach music at the elementary level, while the smallest number teach folk/ethnic arts at the high school level.) Responses indicate that the traditional arts subjects of music and visual arts are given the most emphasis in Wyoming schools, particularly at the elementary school and middle/junior high school levels.

NOTE: Many of the arts specialists in Wyoming are responsible for teaching their students a combination of arts disciplines. The survey responses reflect this trend.

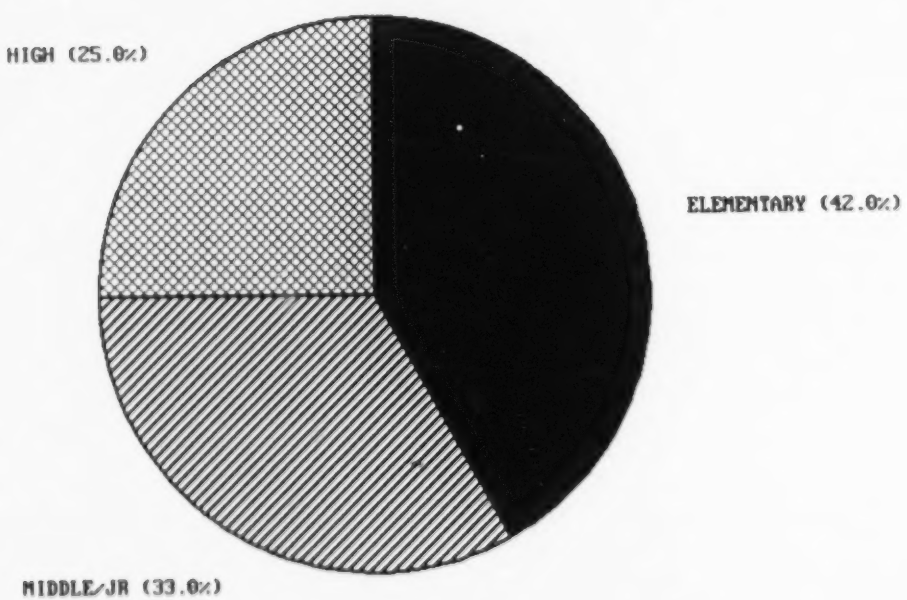
"It is the combination of arts instruction which is essential to cultural literacy."

– *Toward Civilization, A Report on Arts Education,* published by the National Endowment for the Arts

Survey results show a gradual decline in arts classes offered as students progress through the Wyoming school system:

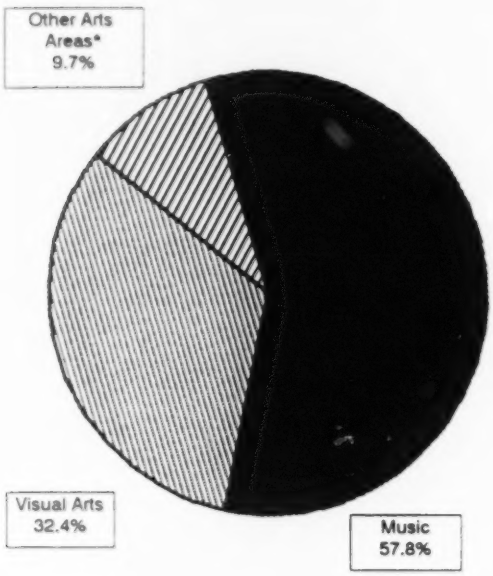
- **42%** of arts classes in Wyoming schools are taught at the elementary level.
- **33%** of arts classes in Wyoming schools are taught at the middle/junior high school level.
- **25%** of arts classes in Wyoming schools are taught at the high school level.

Percent of Arts Classes Offered By Grade Level



ARTS

Availability of Classes

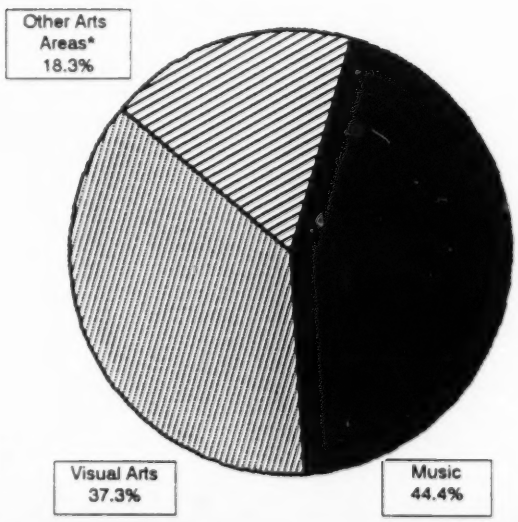


ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

55% of survey respondents teach in elementary schools in Wyoming. According to the survey, music is the most frequently available arts class and is most often required of elementary students. Emphasis is clearly on the traditional subject areas of music and visual arts, with few offerings in other arts areas open to elementary students.

MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

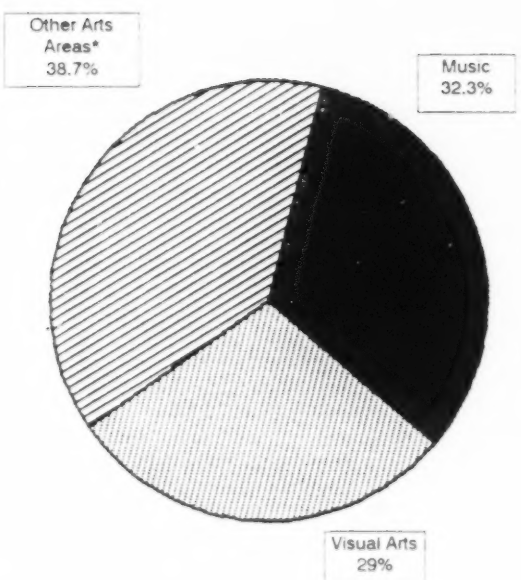
49% of survey respondents represent middle and junior high schools. At this school level, music and visual arts are emphasized most. Some attention, however, is given to other arts areas in the form of electives.



"...arts and humanities education play an important role in cognitive learning and in making the arts and humanities less elitist and more available to all citizens."

– House Report 99-274
(99th U.S.Congress 1st Session)

* Other Arts Areas
include:
Theater/Drama • Dance • Folk/Ethnic and Traditional Arts • Creative Writing



HIGH SCHOOLS

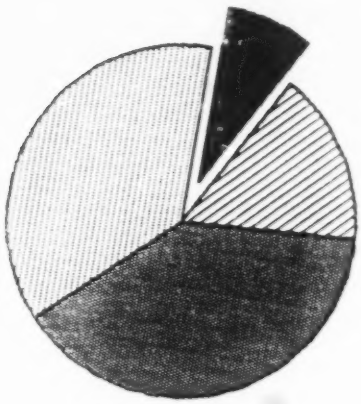
48% of respondents represent Wyoming high schools. As the option of electives increases, the types of classes expand, but their number lessens. Few of respondents' schools require that high school-age students take any arts classes at all.

NOTE: Many survey respondents represent more than one school level as arts specialists who travel from school to school and teach many different grades. Thus, the percentages here will add up to more than 100%.

Time Allocated to Arts Content Areas

Arts Specialists report that they spend an average of 8% of their class time on the history of an art.

HISTORY

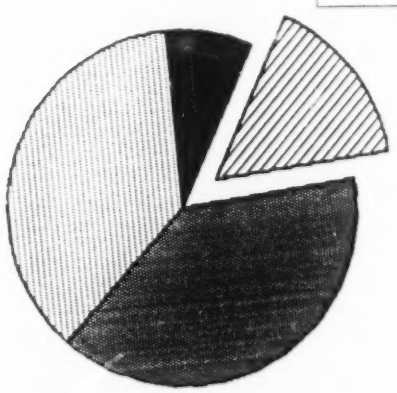


HISTORY

Respondents report that, for the most part, they spend less than 10% of their class time on the history of an art. Very few spend more than 50% of their class time on history.

Arts Specialists report that they spend an average of 16% of their class time on aesthetics of art.

AESTHETICS



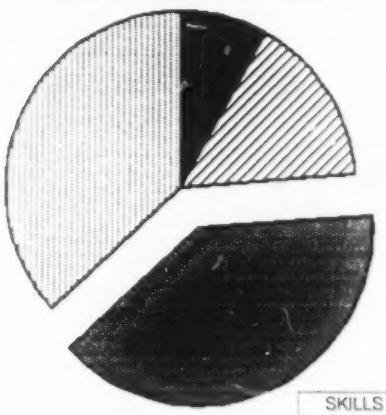
AESTHETICS

Aesthetics receives somewhat more attention as indicated by class time, although a large percent of respondents spend less than 10% of all class time on aesthetics. Only a few respondents devote more than 50% of their class time to aesthetics. The greatest number have given this area of arts education a comfortable 11 to 25% of their class time.

"Basic arts education must give students the essence of our civilization, the civilizations which have contributed to ours, and the more distant civilizations which enrich world civilization as a whole."

– *Toward Civilization, a Report on Arts Education*, published by the National Endowment for the Arts

Arts Specialists report that they spend an average of 39% of their class time on developing students' art skills.



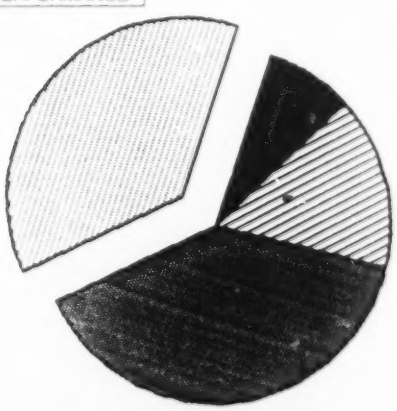
SKILLS

SKILLS

Skills in the arts are emphasized by most respondents. Responses indicate that they spend 25-to-50%, or more than 50%, of their class time on this particular content area.

Arts Specialists report that they spend an average of 37% of their class time on developing arts products or student performances in the arts.

PRODUCT/ PERFORMANCE



PRODUCT/PERFORMANCE

Product and performance in the arts are also stressed by most of the survey respondents, who devote much of their class time to this area.

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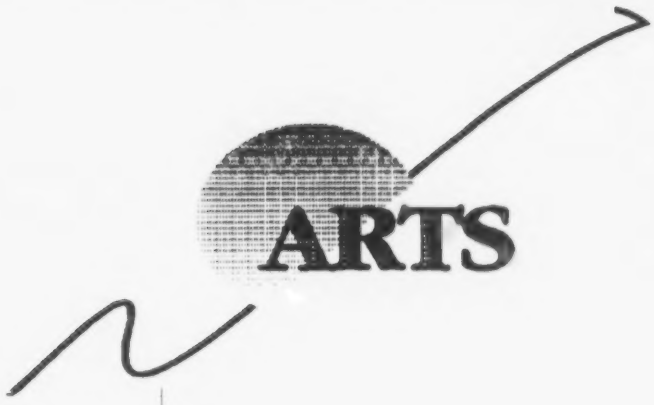


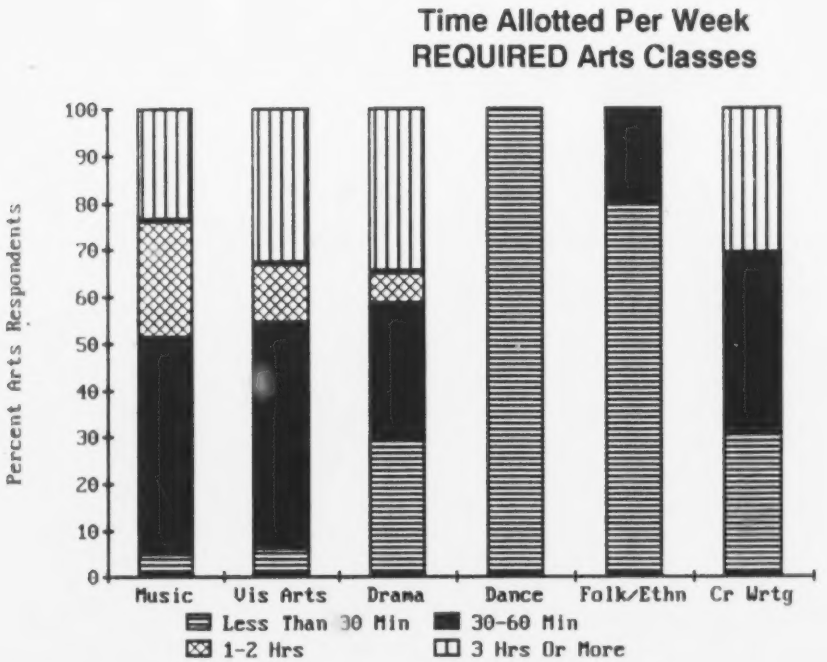
Wyoming Teachers Serve A Broad Spectrum

- **84%** of art teachers report that they also teach disadvantaged and/or at-risk students.
- **31%** report that they teach academically gifted students.
- **34%** report that they teach artistically gifted students.
- **17%** report that they teach bi-lingual or multi-lingual arts education students.

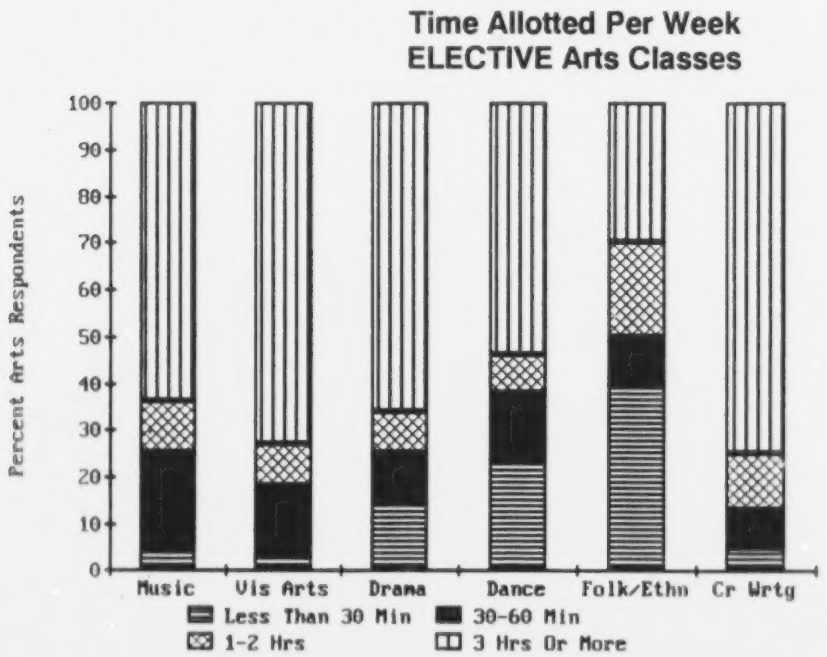
How Often (Hours per week)

The National Endowment for the Arts recommends that 15% of the school week be allotted to the arts in elementary, middle and junior high schools nationwide, and that two full years of pure and integrated arts subjects be allotted for all high school students.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett proposed, as part of his model high school curriculum, an absolute minimum of one semester each of art history and music history for every high school student in America.



In music, the most popular of arts subjects, and the most frequently required, enrolled students generally spend 30 to 60 minutes a week in class. Although drama and creative writing are rarely offered, a substantial number of the students who are required to take them devote more than three hours a week of class time to those subjects.



When offered as electives, time spent in arts classes even more frequently exceeds 3 hours per week for those students enrolled.

Resources

The Wyoming Council on the Arts received a planning grant in FY90 from the National Endowment for the Arts. With these funds, the Council, in conjunction with other state arts and education organizations, will begin to strengthen the sequential, K-12 arts curricula component of the Arts in Education model at the state level. Curricula guidelines at this level will help local communities and school districts develop their arts education programs, thereby strengthening their local holistic models. Interestingly, nearly half of all survey respondents express the need for such assistance at the K-12 level.

Grants and support at the state level are particularly important in light of these findings. Funding at the local level appears to be scarce in Wyoming. Thus, there is a lot of competition and procuring such support can be difficult.

It is not surprising that 73% of survey respondents report that less than 10% of their total arts programs last year were augmented by any arts funding resources at all.

Respondents also report difficulties in locating these funding resources. The majority report that they generally learn of the availability of such resources by direct mail (70%) or by word of mouth (61%).

"By 1989, 49 (98%) of the 50 states will have at least some kind of curriculum document. In 43 states (87%), the documents will cover all grade levels. There are 19 states (38%) that mandate at least a portion of their documents, such as goals; three (6%) mandate their documents for some of the state's students but not for others."

– Getty Center for Education in the Arts

What Is Being Planned

At the 1988 Wyoming Cultural Congress and Arts in Education Conference sponsored by the Wyoming Council on the Arts and the Wyoming Alliance for Arts in Education, two resolutions were adopted:

- The first resolution urges the "Council and the State Legislature to make it mandatory to provide elementary students, (K-6 grades) art and music classes for a minimum of one hour a week to be taught by certified art and certified music teachers."

- The second resolution states "the Cultural Congress believes that every Wyoming resident should have high quality opportunities to be educated in all of the arts and therefore supports individuals, groups and organizations that support these goals."

- In 1989, the Cultural Congress resolved to support the "efforts of the Wyoming Alliance for Arts in Education, and other such interested groups and individuals, in the development of a state K-12 curriculum guide."

- As far as structural expansion of individual schools and district plans, survey findings for the future are as follows:

- 8% reported that their schools or districts were making plans to build new arts facilities for students in Wyoming with specified completion dates within the next ten years.

This brochure was written, designed and desktop published by Linda L. Doherty
Linda's Ink, Cheyenne, Wyoming

Where To Go From Here

The Wyoming Arts In Education Survey in its final form will provide a base from which legislators, school administrators, teachers, artists, parents, arts organizations and other interested parties can view the arts as they are being included in the education of our children.

This information will be useful to them in organizing and advocating for better and more comprehensive education for all of Wyoming's children.

With integrated action, vision, hard work, and the support of legislators, organizations, groups, and individuals throughout Wyoming, it will be an education encompassing the artistic and cultural heritage we share as Americans, and it will capitalize on the marvels and particular talents of coming generations, contributing to the future of our nation and to the quality of life in Wyoming.

To request a copy of the final Arts in Education Survey, please contact:
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(307) 777-7742.

"I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we too will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit."

– John F. Kennedy